



NEWS RELEASE

Texas Animal Health Commission

"Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anthrax Case Confirmed in Hill County

AUSTIN - The first case of anthrax in Texas livestock for 2011 has been detected on a ranch in Hill County near Whitney. The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has quarantined the premise after one cow tested positive for the reportable disease. The initial case is somewhat unusual as it was detected earlier in the year than normal and in a different part of the state than expected. There have been no previous cases of anthrax in livestock reported in Hill County.

Anthrax is a bacterial disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, which is a naturally occurring organism with worldwide distribution, including Texas. Anthrax tends to be diagnosed in livestock and wildlife, most commonly in the summertime in Texas. It usually is detected in the Southwest part of the state. In recent years, cases have been primarily confined to a triangular area bounded by the towns of Uvalde, Ozona and Eagle Pass.

"Specimens were submitted to the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) by the producer's veterinary practitioner, following suspicions that were raised during a post mortem examination," stated Dr. Max Dow, TAHC Region 3 Director in Fort Worth. TAHC regulations require vaccination of susceptible livestock on quarantined premises, as well as the proper disposal of affected carcasses. Quarantines are usually released by the TAHC 10 days after all requirements have been completed for disposal and vaccination.

"It is possible that the dry conditions that much of Texas is enduring may have caused the first case of the year to be found earlier than normal, and/or in a somewhat unusual location," stated Dr. Dee Ellis, TAHC Executive Director. "The TAHC will continue to closely monitor the situation for possible new cases across the state. In the meantime, producers should consult with their veterinary practitioner or local TAHC office about the disease in general, and whether vaccination needs to be considered for their animals," Dr. Ellis added.

If an animal dies from the disease and isn't properly disposed of by burning, the bacteria can spill out into the soil and remain dormant for long periods of time. The anthrax bacteria may resurface on grass or forage under ideal weather and soil conditions during spring and summer months, which could then be ingested. Symptoms of anthrax in livestock can be non-specific including high fever or convulsions, or in many cases acute death is the first sign noticed by a producer. TAHC regulations require that not only the animal carcasses be

disposed of by incineration until “thoroughly consumed,” but any contaminated manure and/or bedding as well. This requirement keeps wild animals from being exposed to the disease, and it will also kill the bacteria, possibly preventing another site from being contaminated with anthrax.

The following are general biosecurity tips that can be helpful to livestock producers who suspect they have an anthrax affected animal or carcass:

- Wear long sleeves and gloves when handling carcasses or when working with or vaccinating livestock to avoid contaminating any sores or scratches on arms or hands. See your doctor if you develop an unusual-looking sore on your hands, arms or other exposed skin. Although it is very rare to contract skin anthrax, this infection requires treatment with antibiotics prescribed by a physician.
- Practice good sanitation. Wash your hands after handling livestock (even if you wear gloves.) Disinfect equipment used on the animals or carcasses. Keep pets and children away from carcasses or bones of dead animals. Move healthy animals away from a pasture where animals have died from the disease.
- Properly dispose of animal carcasses by burning to prevent exposure to other animals, such as predators or dogs.
- Vaccinate livestock if cases occur in the surrounding areas. Anthrax vaccine is a “live” vaccine, so it must not be administered with antibiotics. Vaccinated animals must be withheld from slaughter for two months.
- Restrict the movement of livestock onto or from an affected premise until animals can develop immunity through vaccination (about 10 days).

For more information regarding anthrax, visit <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us> or call 1-800-550-8242.

The Texas Animal Health Commission works to protect the health of all Texas livestock, including: cattle, swine, poultry, sheep, goats, equine animals, and exotic livestock.

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